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AUTHOR Matzen, Richard N., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

If the educational methods of Paulo Freire are imposed on Thais and other Asians, the outcome may not be the reinforcing of, but instead the losing of, their cultural identities. Freire reveals what are vital cultural assumptions for his pedagogy when defining "freedom, silence, confrontation, communication, and self" in "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." Thais, however, define these terms in radically different ways from Freire, and these radical differences raise serious concerns for some students who are required to participate in emancipatory education. Thailand has never experienced colonialism, and 90% of its people are farmers, not industrial or service workers. Buddhist monks have established traditional, as well as non-formal education--since the 13th century their temples and monasteries have been centers for education. The dilemma is that Freire thinks that traditional education is oppressive, yet traditional Buddhist education in Thailand has earthly and spiritual freedom as a goal. A Thai in America processes the culture and language through the filters of Thai language, culture, and Buddhism. A Thai will mistake signs of individualism for signs of status. Thais are likely to find themselves sitting in an American classroom, with problems of acculturation. A case study of a young Thai female immigrant shows just how difficult that acculturation can be. The questions that must be addressed are whether culture is possible without oppression and whether oppression is the only outcome of a non-Freirean education. (Contains 10 notes and 27 references.) (NKA)

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Emancipatory Education Without Enlightenment?

Thais, Americans, and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Richard N. Matzen, Jr.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Emancipatory Education Without Enlightenment?

Thais, Americans, and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed

We aspire to elevate the cultural identities of minority, student, and worker groups through facilitating Freirean and emancipatory education, and we hope that someday subservience to ruling classes is not key to the success or security of these groups. But possibly if Freirean education is imposed on Thais and other Asians, the outcome may not be the reinforcing of, but instead the losing of, these cultural identities. In other words, these groups may assimilate to certain Western cultural assumptions that support a Freirean education. Freire reveals what are vital cultural assumptions for his pedagogy when defining *freedom, silence, confrontation, communication,* and *self* in Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

In this paper I will explain how Thais define these terms in radically different ways than Freire and how these radical differences raise serious concerns for some students who are required to participate in emancipatory education. I will also describe how Thai students fare in Thailand and America, and why one Thai-American student keeps the Freirean dialogic at a distance despite experiencing oppression in America. I conclude that for some students the dialogic word may not be central to emancipatory education and that both the Freirean and Thai educational models are problematic because of cultural, not universal, assumptions.

Freire writes that a fundamental tension of our time is created by our struggle with the issues of domination and liberation as characterized by colonial and economic imperialism (e.g., Freire, 1994, pp. 68-105). As a consequence the scholars Mayo (1993) and Nemiroff (1992) explicitly relate Freirean thought to colonialism and capitalism as found in Western culture(s); however, scholars have generally neglected whether or not Freirean thought has a place in the

educational systems of Asia where colonialism and capitalism have been experienced to some degree.[1] In particular, no one has asked whether or not Freirean thought belongs in Thailand. This question interests me because Thai education is based on Buddhism, a dominant religion in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the comparison between Freirean and Thai educational models has significant implications for Asian and Asian-American students.[2] Our understanding of the implications begins with information about Thailand and its educational system.

Thailand and Buddhism

Thailand has never experienced colonialism, and ninety percent of its people are farmers, not industrial or service workers (Khotanam & Warren, 1991, p. 28).[3] Consequently, rural Thais "have experienced no massive drive to development [but] have enjoyed a high standard of contentment" (Fieg, 1989, p. 15). In addition there are no racially "pure" Thais given their Mon, Khumer, Laotian, Malay, Persian, Indian, and Chinese heritages. What unites Thais is a standard Thai dialect, ethnic diversity, agriculture, and Buddhism (Thailand Travel Guide, 1991, p. 5). Also Thailand has never experienced a peasant revolt (Mole, 1973, p. 70), but it has endured the student-led revolution of 1973 that resulted in the exile of leading government officials (Fieg, 1989, p. 44) . Buddhism has shaped the present Thai educational system, and ninety to ninety-five percent of Thais are Buddhist (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 3; Thailand Travel Guide, 1991, p. 5; Williams, 1983, p. 6). With the student revolution in mind, it seems ironic that the Thai educational system is based on a Buddhist notion that people should cooperate to preserve a natural, hierarchical, and social order (Casebeer & Miller, 1991; Mole, 1973; Thai Ministry of Education, 1982; Williams, 1983).

In Thailand, Buddhist monks have established traditional, as well as non-formal,

education. Since the 13th century, Buddhist temples and monasteries have been centers for education (Ministry of Education, 1982, p. 3). As early as 1940 Buddhist monks received legislative support for providing Thais with non-formal education, and this support eventually created the Thai Department of Non-Formal Education (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 6). Presently, eighty percent of Thais are involved in non-formal education (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 6).

The Thai emphasis on non-formal education is comparable to the educational projects that Freire associates with emancipatory education (1994, p. 36) and that Mayo associates with positive, government involvement in critical pedagogy (1993, p. 25). In fact, according to the Thai government, its duty is "to provide education for the out-of-school and the underprivileged population in order to give all people of all ages opportunities to study and to improve their occupation and living conditions" (Ministry of Education, 1982, p. 8). Hence, the government legislates that all Thais may choose between mainstream and non-formal education so that Thai adolescents and adults in non-formal or special educational programs have an equal opportunity to attend a Thai university (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 6-8; Williams, 1983, p. 18). Also Thais have evening, adult classes and opportunities to earn a college degree through *distance education*. Distance education means that an adult may register for class, buy the texts, attend radio lectures, and travel to the university for test-taking. Some Thais have changed their lives for the better by earning a degree or degrees in this manner (J. Gebhard, personal communication, December 18, 1995). These circumstances exist because of the Buddhist belief that each person needs an equal opportunity to create good karma and to advance toward greater consciousness.

In summation today Buddhist teachings are taught in public schools (Mole, 1973, pp.

57-8; Williams, 1983, p. 6); the typical Thai family has at least one member who has studied "Buddha's teachings in a monastery" (Thailand Travel Guide, 1991, p. 5); the Buddhist temple or monastery is the social center of each Thai village, town, or city (Mole, 1973, p. 58); and Buddhist teachings have made the Thai educational system successful (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 8; Thailand Travel Guide, 1991, p. 5; Williams, 1983, p. 6). The literacy rate in Thailand is ninety percent (Casebeer & Miller, 1991, p. 3).

Contrastive Terms/Praxis and Dialectic

Now our dilemma is that Freire thinks that traditional education is oppressive, yet traditional Buddhist education in Thailand has earthly and spiritual freedom as a goal (Buddhadasa, 1988; Chah, 1982). Like Thai Buddhists believe (Williams, 1983, p. 6), Freire believes that a higher consciousness and human completion are possible outcomes of *freedom* (Freire, 1994, p. 39). But according to him, freedom is a quality that we define for ourselves; whereas, according to Buddhists and Thais, the natural world defines freedom. In greater contrast, Freire associates dialogue and political struggle with freedom (e.g., Pedagogy of the Oppressed and A Pedagogy for Liberation). Whereas, Buddhists and Thais associate merit-making and reincarnation with freedom (Buddhadasa, 1988; Chah, 1982; Lester, 1973).

When defining *silence*, Thais and Freire have another disagreement. For Thais "often silence is preferable to speech" (Williams, 1983, p. 16). Like other Southeastern Asians, Thais believe that silence and speech are "dynamically concomitant" (Bruneau & Ishii, 1994, p. 248). Consequently understanding silence is essential to understanding Thai culture because "customs, traditions, social mannerisms, social stability, normative actions, and the like...relate to habitual silences" (Bruneau & Ishii, 1994, p. 247). Yet Freire (1994) denounces any "culture of silence"

(pp. 12-5) or any "theme of silence" (p. 87) as indicative of "mutism, or not verbally and concretely materializing the dialectic process" (p. 87; also see Freire's The Politics of Education).

We also see great differences in how Thais and Freire manage *confrontation*. Thais avoid confrontation particularly with persons of higher status (Fieg, 1989, p. 33; Mole, 1973, p. 73; Williams, 1983, pp. 16-8). Like other Asians, Thais use "nonverbal responsiveness, indirect verbal strategies...informal intermediaries, and...cautionary silence" to circumvent any social conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 368). Thai students do not question teachers' authority, or challenge teachers, all of whom have greater social status than students. That is, the students avoid any semblance of confrontation (Mole, 1973, pp. 36-8, 67; Williams, 1983, pp. 3, 5). Also Thai students are reluctant to speak in class (Fieg, 1989, p. 25).

Opposing this tradition, Freire condemns students or peasants who think that the teacher "is the one who has knowledge and to whom they should listen" (1994, p. 45). Especially when the teacher is a traditional *(banking)* educator, Freire thinks, the student or peasant is obligated to confront that oppressive teacher through implementing dialogic, problem-posing strategies (1994, p. 90). Essentially Freire (1994) believes that *communication* or the Word is meant to express discontent (p. 18), to motivate freedom (p. 47), to create critical thinking (p. 73), and to inspire political action. In contrast Thais believe that communication is a way to harmonize society, so Thais do not speak about social evil (Williams, 1983, p. 16; Mole, 1973, pp. 73-4). They talk of the common good as it relates to their interdependence (Williams, 1983, p. 17).

For Freire, in other words, *communication* is suppose to reconstruct history and culture (Freire, qtd. in Nemiroff, 1992, p. 58), and the avoidance of the Word means fearful neglect of social responsibility (Freire, 1994, p. 21). In contrast for Thais and other Asians, the "nonverbal

and the extra-verbal at times assume greater importance than the verbal dimension of communication" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 367). Therefore in Thai culture, communicative competence is "in sharp contrast to the view of Western rhetoric and communication that the verbal, especially speech, is...dominant" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 367). That is, like other people of Southeast Asia, Thais think that an emphasis on speech, particularly as a way to heighten individualism, is foreign. To talk of one's self leads to being alienated from one's own culture, which is the opposite outcome that the Freirean dialogue is suppose to have.

Within a Freirean sensibility, the concepts of *freedom, silence, confrontation*, and *communication* define the *self* as the central object of man's reflection (Freire, 1994, p. 78). Whereas in the Thai sensibility, these concepts define the Buddhist trait of life, Anatta or *no-self* (Buddhadasa, 1988; Chah, 1982; Mole, 1973). Anatta implies that the natural world, not the self, is central to man's reflections. Likewise, a Thai Buddhist is not to talk about the self as the self (Buddhadasa, 1988, pp. 7-10, 16, 78-9; Chah, 1982, pp. 23-4, 30, 53-5; Mole, 1973, p. 30; Williams, 1983, p. 17) and defines happiness as a "detachment of the self from feelings and desires" (Fieg, 1989, p. 41). Besides Anatta or *no-self*, there are two other basic traits of life according to Thai Buddhism, Dukkha or suffering and Anicca or impermancy (Buddhadasa, 1988; Mole, 1973).

These characteristics of life, I propose, cause Thais to think critically about existence and to conceive of substantive changes in their lives. For them, the creation of a greater good, or improving one's karma through merit-making, is an activity made of actions, not words (Buddhadasa, 1988; Chah, 1982; Lester, 1973; Mole, 1973). Now I am considering that Thai Buddhism causes Thais to know praxis and dialectic, as Freire defines each, praxis being the

ability to reflect upon reality or to define it, e.g., how culture and history form a praxis, and dialectic being the tension that exists between co-dependent opposite forces, e.g., how the powerful and powerless co-exist (Freire, 1994, pp. 67-105). For Thais, praxis and dialectic are not created by these subjective/objective tensions, however, that may exist within an individual (or may not). Rather, praxis and dialectic tensions exist because freedom and karma, and the natural and social order. How else could we be fixated by no-self, suffering, and impermancy, and be transfixed by the wordless void of being here?

To compare Thai and Freirean sensibilities is difficult, but to dismiss Thai (Buddhist) education as *banking* education seems unfair. In any case, I am supposing that we may benefit from considering the possibility that the Thai educational model is neither dialogical nor antidialogical (see Freire, 1994, pp. 106-64). A Freirean, antidialogical analysis of Thai education is inappropriate because it assumes political, not religious, influences dominate how a country shapes its educational system, and a Freirean dialogical analysis of Thai education is inappropriate for Thailand, too, because it assumes that a certain kind of dialogue exists in the classroom as well as discounts nonverbal behaviors.

Nevertheless in Thai schools and society, hierarchical power structures are the norm, and that reality does invite a Freirean analysis, even an awkward one. For instance, on the one hand, we have to contend with the Freirean notion that hierarchical power structures are immoral and not democractic, but on the other hand, we have the Thais view that hierarchical, social structures are natural, positive occurrences that give social mobility meaning (Fieg, 1989, pp. 16, 20; Williams, 1983, p. 18). Although this view opposes Freire's negative view of the class system, Thais see it as a means for actualizing democracy. So, in Thai society, a Thai with a humble

background may peacefully assume the throne (Fieg, 1989, p. 44), and a peasant may end up as a prime minister (Fieg, 1989, p. 35). In either case, the karma resulting from merit-making is the determining factor for each individual's *situatedness*. Karma or merit-making, in other words, is the means to realize a democratic ideal, not the dialogic word as Freire supposes.

Like Freire, Thais do emphasize the importance of education. Each Thai may create good karma through choosing between formal and non-formal education and knowing that in either case, a college education is possible. In addition Schwille and Wheeler inform us that the Thai government plays multiple roles in the educational system because its not a monolithic, centralized system, bent on oppression (1992, p. 225): it is a system ordered by Thai Buddhists and Buddhism. Yet, Freire would have us consider that government support of education may be disingenuous. Is it in Thailand? To conclude here, the scholars Casebeer and Miller (1991) and Schwille and Wheeler (1992) believe that the Thai educational model is one to be emulated in other countries because of its providing multiple opportunities to receive an education.[4]

Thais in America

A Thai in America processes our culture and language through the filters of Thai language, culture, and Buddhism. Here, a Thai expects social status is as important as it is in Thailand where "no two people have the same status" (Williams, 1983, p. 15). Consequently a Thai will mistake signs of individualism for signs of status. Age, gender, work, address, wealth--all indicate social status in Thailand, but mark individualism here. To indicate status, the Thai language has a sophisticated pronoun system. Actually one linguist needed sixty-four pages to describe the relationship between Thai pronouns and status (Fieg, 1989, p. 21). As might be expected, therefore, a Thai first misunderstands Americans because Thai cultural values are

thought to exist here. In a Freirean sense, possessing the "wrong" cultural assumptions for Americans problematizes a Thai's thoughts.[5]

In America a Thai hopes that being here will be alright, in part, because the Thai government has consistently incorporated English into the Thai educational system (Ministry of Education, 1982, pp. 3-4), so it is reasonable for the Thai to expect that his or her English will make Americans intelligible. Yet knowing some English does not prepare a Thai for culture shock in general, or in particular, for the shock of reading criticism of political leaders in our newspaper and magazines. In Thailand, a journalist is the partner of the government (Khotanam & Warren, 1991, p. 28); consequently, our political discourse is particularly confusing to a Thai. Also a Thai is most likely to know English words that are business terms; political words are least likely to be known (Kapper, 1992). The adversarial rancor of our politics further estranges a Thai from us because his or her strong Buddhist traditions in Thailand have made that country into an international "centre for peace education, emphasizing themes such as reverence for life and nature and the Buddhist philosophy of non-violence" (Bovernsiri & Fry, 1991, p. 34).

That aside, a Thai is likely to find him- or herself sitting in an American classroom among Americans, who expect dissension and condemnation of current social and political situations. In addition, a Thai in an American school may be unsettled because not only is the teacher questioned, but students do not bow to the teacher when it is appropriate! More acculturation problems arise because "being a Thai student [here] means alienation from the mainstream American population" (Gebhard, 1987, p. 13). When viewed from a western psychological perspective, the Thai student seems to suffer from problems that grow in an overcontrolled Thai society, i.e., shyness, compulsivity, silence, fearfulness, etc. (Chaiysit, et. al., 1993).[7] In any case,

after months of culture shock, the Thai realizes that the English language really is a magnet for acculturation and assimilation problems.

To survive this challenge, the Thai student in America plays to his or her strength and "uses reading [English] to overcome other language problems" (Gebhard, 1987, p. 16).[8] Then, to survive culture shock problems, the Thai student takes refuge from us by living with Thai or Asian students off-campus (Gebhard, 1987, p. 20). Of course, culture shock explains why some Thai students return home before completing their American education.

Not all Thais in American universities are international students. Some are immigrants, permanent residents, or American citizens. Incidentally like other Asian-Americans, they often seek "occupations where success is less contingent on drawing attention to the self or influencing other people" (Park, 1995, p. 1199; see Markus and Kitayama, 1991, 1994).[9] In such a way, Thais or Thai-Americans accommodate our individualistic cultural patterns less and conform to their own collectivist patterns more. They express *no-self*. At this point, Noc's story is relevant.[10]

In Thailand she had communicative competencies in Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and English. However, she did not complete high school there. Since coming here in 1975, she has dreamed of earning her GED. During the mid 1970s she studied in a GED program and passed the naturalization exam. Her education was interrupted when her second American husband abandoned her and kidnapped their infant son. After an attorney told her that she could not afford his help, a paid detective told her that her husband could not be located. The husband's family refused any contact with Noc.

Noc married a third time. Like the other two American husbands, this one did not appreciate her Thai heritage or cultural values. He heard her broken English and silences. By

him, Noc had two children. But his unemployment, extramarital affairs, and extended family caused seven years of marriage to end. Unfortunately, too, Noc's Thai values lent themselves to an unfavorable divorce agreement, and she began paying child support to her husband because she was employed.

Prior to finalizing the divorce agreement, her husband began to live with an uneducated, European-American woman who verbally and physically abused Noc's children for five years. This women had three children of her own, each by a different father, and she was a long-term welfare recipient. During those years Noc was not allowed regular visits with her children, and her ex-husband denied the children medical care, particularly when Noc offered to provide it. In addition, this exhusband and the European-American mother maintained a sexually charged household, provided the children with pornographic materials, and exposed them to sexually explicit language. Today, Noc's exhusband is awaiting trial for first-degree sexual assault and third-degree sexual molestation.

In the early 1990s, Noc meet her fourth husband. A college graduate, he modeled Western communication skills for her by accompanying her during her visits to doctors, lawyers, teachers, employers, etc. His recent years as a graduate student have placed Noc. and himself in an American school environment. Subsequently, he located GED programs for Noc. Also his schooling gave Noc opportunities to associate with educated women of color and international students including Thais. In part, in reaction to Noc's exhusband's excesses, the dialogue with the new husband was best characterized as Freirean.

To legally protect Noc's children from their blood father (the exhusband), the new husband employed six lawyers since 1992, and two psychologist, two counselors, and one

polygrapher since 1994. In 1992 the husband and Noc sought custody of her children and were denied that by an Oregon judge. In 1994 Noc's exhusband accused Noc's present husband of sexually abusing Noc's daughter. As a consequence, Noc and her husband began to suffer political and economic oppression, and the exhusband's subsequently manipulated agencies of government. For instance, he convinced Children Services Division (CSD) of Oregon to attempt to severe Noc's relationship with the her children, and he convinced the police to investigate Noc's husband for allegedly, sexually abusing the daughter.

Her persent husband was never charged with an offense, but he voluntarily took and passed the polygraph and sexual-offender tests in the hope of ending CSD's interference with his family. Nevertheless, CSD prolonged the damage to his family, finances, and career. With the support of the judge, they suspended normal visitations between Noc and her children for a year and a half, and ironically, later, in response to Noc's exhusband being arrested for the aforementioned sexual offenses against minor children, the local judge denied Noc a hearing and placed her children with the exhusband's mother. Apparently, the judge did not trust Noc or her husband to care for the children or to be acquainted with them. The judge never explained his decision to the couple.

For Noc and her husband, their legal and financial struggles continue because of their attempts to protect her children. Consequently, her husband perpetuates a Freirean dialogue with public assistance officials, lawyers, psychologists, counselors, etc., yet with the same professionals, Noc's dialogue avoids blame and self-righteousness. Her words, I think, are not correctly characterized as dialogic or antidialogic because she does not intend her words to conquer or to persuade. Rather, their intent is to strengthen interdependence, to acknowledge

social status, and to avoid any semblance of confrontation. Therefore, her wordings are neutral, ambiguous, and indirect communications. That is, Noc maintains her Thai communicative and cultural values despite her current husband's Freirean conversational style and despite her own advanced communicative competence in English. In a sense, Noc's high-context Buddhist heritage disempowers emancipatory education because to speak English and to acquire a verbal dialectic are separate events.

Noc has been living in America for twenty-one years and has been with her present husband for six years now. During the last four years, she has been attending local, adult education programs that are representative of *banking* education as it exists in ESL settings. That is, Noc has had teachers who understand literacy as "a functional skill or as acquisition of a fixed body of cultural knowledge" (Pennycook, 1990, p. 309) instead of having teachers who understand literacy as "a means for learners to decode and demythologize their own cultural traditions and the inequitable structures" of society in general (Pennycook, 1990, p. 309). In other words, her educational background may support a *banking* mentality although her personal situation and husband seems to support the contrary.

That Noc has critical thinking abilities is evident when she speaks to her husband or a trusted friend about the circumstances surrounding her children. With an intimate associate, a Thai is more likely to utter a statement that may be comparable to the critical thought of a Freirean dialogic. But Noc's critical thoughts are given as questions, or comments, or statements: they are not intended to sustain a Freirean, or Burkian, or Socratic discussion. Rather, they are snippets of synthesis that express no-self, suffering, and impermancy. Because of the Thai and GED schools, Noc seems to have faith in *banking* education, and because of her relationship with

her husband, she also seems to accept *his* faith in Freirean thought. In short, she maintains *her* own faith in Buddhism and in Thai cultural values while in America. She has praxis and dialectic tensions, too, and a will-to-freedom because she continues to fight for her children through actions, not words. Her actions are submitting herself to the judgements of psychologists, lawyers, and judges in the hope that professionals will make merit. Therefore, I suggest that her actions may have a Freirean nature.

To conclude as proponents of emancipatory education, we need to remember that "if the linguistic ability of bilingual speakers is assessed with reference to only one of their languages, rather than with reference to the total repertoire, it is likely that they will be judged as inadequate" (Milroy, 1991, p. 125). We may consider, too, that if critical thinking skills are judged only in reference to one culture, rather than to others, assessment is likely to be in error. We cannot forget, that is, that assessing linguistic ability often means assessing cultural values as well. So, what criteria are we to use to measure the success of Thai- or Asian-Americans who are in American schools? At the very least, we should reconsider the warning of some Freirean scholars who are against turning critical pedagogy or emancipatory education into an oppressive ideology (Mayo, 1993, p. 25; Nemiroff, 1992, p. 59; Pennycook, 1990, p. 310). We should consider that Thai students and Thai-Americans may never easily fit into the Freirean mindset so that they may preserve their own cultural heritages and identities.

It seems to me, consequently, that we do not understand how emancipatory education is affected by cross-cultural communication or by the gap between "lived experience and official ideology" (Villanueva, 1992, p. 30). As a consequence, here are a few of the many questions that we have yet to answer: Is culture possible without oppression? Is oppression the only outcome

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of a non-Freirean education? What is the relationship between culture shock and problematizing? Is emancipatory education possible when religion, not politics, shapes it? Is dehumanization made of silence as Freire suggests or is it made of evil actions as Buddhists suggest? If Buddhists and Thais have reached some Freirean outcome but have maintained a class system, can we learn from them? If the Thai educational system is not antidialogical or dialogical, what is it? If we grant that critical pedagogy is based on cultural assumptions, not universal ones, then why not consider it as prescriptive, not as descriptive? Are we so enlightened as to know that Thais should deny their cultural heritage--their Buddhism--for the sake of Freirean enlightenment? Can a dialectic be experienced at a conscious level that is not made of words? Are all educational models, models for assimilation? Are questions that words don't answer the most important questions of all?

Footnotes

[1]In part because Freire grounds his writings in colonialism and capitalism as experienced in Latin and South America, the adoptability of critical pedagogy for Asian countries has been unexamined although Pennycook's article is a notable exception (1990). In general, whether critical pedagogy works for Asians needs to be examined because Freirean thought has influenced America's education system, a system that includes Asian-Americans, and Americans export their pedagogies which may include Freirean aspects.

[2]"Department of Education data shows that Asian American college enrollments jumped by more than 110 percent nationally between 1978 and 1988" (Kiang, 1992, p. 97).

[3]Prapasri Promprakai of Bangkok University, who is quoted in Khotanam & Warren (1991, p. 28), estimates that ninety percent of Thais are farmers; however, other sources claim that only eighty percent of Thais are closely connected to agriculture (Williams, 1983, p. 3; Thailand Travel Guide, 1991, p. 5). For more information on how capitalism has, and has not affected Thai values, I recommend reading Fieg (1989), Mole (1973), and Williams (1983).

[4]For a less positive and critical examination of the Thai educational system, see Bovernsiri and Fry (1991). For an examination of the role that the private sector plays in the Thai educational system, see Schwille and Wheeler (1992) and Bovernsiri and Fry (1991).

[5]Freire (1994) discusses how being aware of being "situated" may lead the learner toward the desirable process of "problematizing" the social environment: "Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be 'in a situation'" (p. 90).

[6]According to Mole (1973), only 380,351 of 4,527,000, or about 8.3% of, Thais

continued their education beyond the seventh grade. For this reason, he claims that a "limited number of Thai...have sufficient education to effectively challenge the system" (p. 63).

[7]For more information about the difficulty of explaining Thai psychology in terms of Western psychology, see Dragun (1990).

[8]I have observed that Thais and other Asian students may plagiarize, not write, when first in an American classroom and asked to comment on a reading, to summarize an article, or to write a research paper. This tendency, I believe, comes from lacking plagiarism as a concept, from privileging published texts over written ones, and from an emphasis on respecting the thoughts of others. It is also indicative of having receptive language skills, i.e., listening and reading, emphasized over productive skills, i.e., speaking and writing, in the schools of their home countries.

[9]For more information about Thai higher education and how Thais apply to American schools, see Johnson (1978).

[10]To guarantee confidentiality, "Noc" is not this Thai person's true name.

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